

## IMPLEMENTING THE ARMY FAMILY COVENANT: HOW WELL IS THE ARMY DOING?

BY

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HOW WELL IS THE ARMY DOING?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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## IMPLEMENTING THE ARMY FAMILY COVENANT: HOW WELL IS THE ARMY DOING?

We must care for one of our most precious resources – the children and families of our Soldiers.

—General John A. Wickham, Jr.<sup>1</sup>

Under Title 10, Section 3583, commissioned Army leaders are expected to “take all necessary and proper measures, under the laws, regulations, and customs of the Army, to promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the officers and enlisted persons under their command or charge.”<sup>2</sup> To do this, leaders have to be aware of how changes in the internal environment will affect the organization of the Army and its culture.

Today’s Army has been at war for over seven years. In that time, Soldiers and families have endured long, and sometimes, multiple deployments. In April 2007, the then Acting Secretary of the Army Pete Geren and the Army Chief of Staff General George Casey established seven Army Initiatives to examine, analyze and develop processes to better support the All-Volunteer Army.<sup>3</sup> The seven initiatives are: (1) grow the Army; (2) enhance support to Soldiers and families; (3) modernize the force; (4) transition the Reserve Component to an operational reserve; (5) develop leaders; (6) adapt institutional policies, programs, and procedures; and (7) build strategic communications capability.<sup>4</sup>

Of the seven initiatives, Army Initiative 2 (AI2), enhance support to Soldiers and families, is a critical element in sustaining the All-Volunteer Army, especially during a time of protracted conflict. This criticality became center stage during General Casey’s first four months on the job. As Casey traveled around the Army talking to Soldiers, spouses, Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders and family members from the Active

component, Army Reserve and National Guard,<sup>5</sup> he found an Army “out of balance”<sup>6</sup> and a culture that needed to change to meet the demands of its current mission. The force, and especially their families, are stressed and stretched; the result of the combined effects of an operational tempo providing insufficient recovery time, insufficient training for counterinsurgency operations, and Reserve Components assigned missions for which they were not originally intended nor adequately resourced.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the top priority for the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army over the next several years is to restore balance by focusing on four key areas: (1) Sustain Soldiers, families and Army civilians in an era of persistent conflict, (2) Prepare Soldiers, units and equipment to meet the demands of the current operational environment, (3) Reset the force for future deployments and other contingencies, and (4) Transform the force to meet the needs of the Combatant Commanders in a changing security environment.<sup>8</sup>

The Soldier Family Action Plan (SFAP) is the roadmap the Army is using to address Army Initiative 2 (AI2); enhance support to Soldiers and their families, and the first key area identified above; sustaining Soldiers and their families in an era of persistent conflict, and it addresses requirements and actions needed to enhance support to Soldiers and their families. To prove its commitment in this endeavor, the Army, in October 2007, unveiled the Army Family Covenant (AFC) at the Association of the United States Army Annual Conference in Washington DC. The AFC is the Army’s promise to provide balance in sustaining Soldiers and their families by: (1) standardizing and funding family programs and services, (2) providing top quality healthcare, (3) improving housing, (4) ensuring excellence in schools, youth programs and child care,

(5) expanding employment and educational opportunities for families (6) improving Soldier quality of life, and (7) providing Soldiers and their families a supportive environment where they can live and thrive.<sup>9</sup> The SFAP established 112 tasks under the seven functional areas of the AFC which will be used as its operation plan.

Change in a mature, successful organization is difficult, takes time, commitment, and requires an implementation strategy. Therefore, implementing the AFC will not only require change; change in concepts, programs, products, services, facilities, systems, and images, but more importantly it will take commitment on the part of the Army's leadership to ensure the AFC lives up to its promise. Using Kotter's Eight Stage Process of Creating Change, this paper will examine how well the Army is doing in implementing the AFC. The paper will also review the functional areas of the AFC to see what actions are being taken and then conclude by providing a recommendation on what needs to be accomplished to ascertain whether or not the Army's increased emphasis on family programs is helping to reduce their stress. However, to put everything into perspective, the paper will start with a history of the Army family to show how families went from being a burden on the Army to being an integral part of it.

### History of the Army Family

From the Revolutionary War up until World War II (WWII), families were considered a burden to the Army, so in its earliest existence the Army avoided any formal reference to family issues. Families following their Soldier across the continent were described as "camp followers" who tended to chores such as laundering, mending clothing, cooking meals and nursing the wounded.<sup>10</sup> Camp followers were expected to earn their keep and were under the complete and arbitrary authority of the regimental

and post commanders.<sup>11</sup> In the late 1800s, Army regulations began to formally acknowledge an obligation to provide basic needs for families, but only for those of officers and senior NCOs since it was assumed that enlisted men would not be married.<sup>12</sup> In addition, until 1942, Army regulations forbade peacetime reenlistment of men with wives and minor children and did not extend housing, rations-in-kind and medical care in Army facilities to enlisted families.<sup>13</sup>

The United States participation in World War I was so short lived it did not have much of an impact on the Army family, but as WWII progressed this changed. In 1940 there were 267,767 men on active duty of which 67,000 were married and had families.<sup>14</sup> Brigadier General Lewis B. Hershey, the director of the Selective Service, in a report to the President on the peacetime draft wrote it was necessary to preserve family life to the greatest extent possible, so young men registering for the Selective Service were given dependency deferments if their dependents needed the registrant's income for support;<sup>15</sup> maintaining the Army's emphasis on single Soldiers.

By 1942 the number of active duty Army personnel rose to 3,074,184.<sup>16</sup> This massive build up of the Army produced large numbers of young Soldiers and families who experienced stress, financial hardships, and separation anxiety. The Army soon found itself turning to the Red Cross and other charitable organizations for families needing emergency support, but resources were too scarce to help all the families in need.<sup>17</sup> Realizing the Army needed an agency of its own to help families, the Secretary of War directed the establishment of the Army Emergency Relief (AER); a private non-profit organization to collect and administer funds to relieve the stress of Army members and their families.<sup>18</sup>

“The Army takes care of its own,”<sup>19</sup> became the AER slogan, but in reality this approach to addressing family concerns was ad hoc and reactive. The Army continued in this vain throughout the Korean War. In 1952, a study by Elizabeth Wickenden cited the shabby way in which family members were treated due to the lack of basic social services,<sup>20</sup> but this treatment could not be ignored as the number of family members grew. However, effective remediation did not occur until 1965 with the establishment of the Army Community Service (ACS).

To support each other, Army spouses volunteered to operate lending closets, thrift shops and nurseries and raised funds to help Army families in need. When the volunteer leaders of these ad hoc groups were transferred the support for these services languished until someone else was willing to lead the group.<sup>21</sup> The ACS was first proposed on an Army wide level in 1963 to offer services such as assisting handicapped dependents, providing child care, and establishing a volunteer corps to provide this support. The proposal was rejected as the purpose of the Army was to win wars not operate a social service agency.<sup>22</sup> But as military needs mounted and it became all too clear that family life was having an enormous impact on the performance of active duty Soldiers, the proposal was reworked and resubmitted. In July 1965, Gen. Harold K. Johnson, then-Army Chief of Staff, announced approval and established the ACS program to alleviate some of the concerns of the families by providing some of the family support services being done by volunteers.<sup>23</sup>

The Army began to truly understand the importance of family programs and the need for improved benefits when, in 1973, the U.S. ended the draft and started the All Volunteer Force (AFV). In order to recruit a volunteer force, the Army needed to find

ways to entice men and women to wear its uniform. The incentives used included competitive salaries, educational benefits, retirement benefits, housing, and medical care, but incentives would not be enough if the Army did not put a greater emphasis on family needs.

In the early 1980's, military spouse volunteers organized three family symposiums to highlight family issues and to seek resolution.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, local volunteer groups sprung up to provide support to the families of deployed units.<sup>25</sup> Initially called Family Support Groups (FSGs), the volunteers held routine meetings, provided information on the deployed unit, and became a social and recreational contact for the families. The concept of FSGs was so successful it took hold across the Army. Today, known as Family Readiness Groups (FRGs), they are command-sponsored organizations "of family members, volunteers, Soldiers and civilian employees belonging to a unit, that together provide an avenue of mutual support and assistance, and a network of communications among the family members, the chain of command, chain of concern, and community resources."<sup>26</sup>

By 1983, the Army Chief of Staff, General John A. Wickham, realized the need to articulate the Army's commitment to ensure adequate care for families of its members and as a result signed the *Chief of Staff, US Army White Paper 1983 —The Army Family*, which identified the need for increased support to Army Families. This landmark document, clearly recognizing the changes needed to support the family and recruit an All Volunteer Army, led to the creation of the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) in 1984. The AFAP, a forum for families to address their needs and concerns with Army

leaders,<sup>27</sup> is centered on the family and the impact military life has on their day to day living.<sup>28</sup>

For over 20 years, there have been several recurring issues addressed in the AFAP which have required action or change; (1) family support, (2) medical/dental benefits, (3) child and youth services, and (4) spouse employment,<sup>29</sup> that have also been addressed in other ways as well. In 1989, a Soldier Issue Forum convened by the CSA highlighted attention on issues such as housing, health care, and spousal employment.<sup>30</sup> In 1994, Army Family Team Building (AFTB) was established to foster individual and family support and readiness through training and information on the Army.<sup>31</sup> In 2002, to increase private sector employment for military spouses, the CSA held an employment summit with Fortune 500 companies.<sup>32</sup> During the 17 years following the signing of the Army Family White Paper, the Army and its communities made considerable advances in caring for families, but nothing prepared them for the stress and strain of what Soldiers and their families would face in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

On October 7, 2008 the United States began its eighth year of combat operations in the War on Terror. This is the third longest war in American history and the first extended conflict since the Revolutionary War that has been fought with an AVF. For 35 years, through various incentives already discussed, enlistment and re-enlistment in the AVF has been highly successful, but it takes more than incentives to recruit and maintain an AVF in times of war.

Today's Army is less than two thirds the size it was at the end of the Cold War.<sup>33</sup> As of November 2008 there were 693,000 Soldiers on active duty status with an

authorized active component end-strength of 547,000.<sup>34</sup> Increases in the operational tempo for active and reserve forces, including multiple tours in the combat areas of Afghanistan and Iraq, resulted in significant recruitment shortages in 2005; with the Army's having the worst recruiting figures since 1999.<sup>35</sup> New referral and enlistment bonuses helped to improve recruiting figures in 2006. In sharp contrast, re-enlistments in 2005 were the highest they had been in five years; 69,350 active component Soldiers – 5,350 more than required,<sup>36</sup> but there was a catch. In order to achieve these numbers, the Army had to widen the window to Soldiers whose service would expire as far out as 24 months. In addition, deployed Soldiers in Afghanistan, Kuwait, or Iraq were permitted to reenlist regardless of when their service contract would expire<sup>37</sup> which gave them the opportunity to receive a tax free re-enlistment bonus.

Today's career Soldiers are demanding more quality of life benefits, such as better housing, childcare services, medical benefits, and family advocacy programs, as incentives to remain in Service.<sup>38</sup> More than half of the Army's Soldiers are married (56.7%) and 46% have children.<sup>39</sup> Soldiers want to ensure their families are being taken care of while they are at war or deployed around the globe. The health and well-being of Soldiers is a critical component to combat readiness. According to a report published in March 2005 on the elimination of unhealthy behaviors among Soldiers and their spouses, the "combat readiness of our troops is enhanced when the spouse left behind is healthy and confident in his/her ability to care for self and family."<sup>40</sup> This is why an emphasis on family readiness is so important to the Army. Family readiness is explicitly linked to Soldier readiness. Soldiers need to be able to focus on the mission knowing that their personal lives are in balance and their needs are being met. Retention levels



rise when Soldiers believe the Army is committed to their well being and the well-being of their families.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, implementation of the AFC will help towards readiness.

### Implementing the Army Family Covenant

Strategic leaders are aware that organizations need to be agile and flexible if they are to survive in today's environment and realize if change is slow and incremental, or too cumbersome, the overall goal of the organization will not be met. At the unveiling of the AFC, Secretary Geren stated, "Ours is a combat Army. It is a strong Army. However, if we are complacent, if we ignore the lessons learned and warning signs of six years of war, the seams that are exposed in the crucible of combat, in the field or on the home-front, our Army Soldiers and families will wear down."<sup>42</sup>

So what has the Army done over the past year to ensure the AFC lives up to its promise? John Kotter, author of *Leading Change*, asserts there is an eight-step process to creating major change in an organization: (1) establishing a sense of urgency, (2) creating the guiding coalition, (3) developing a vision and strategy, (4) communicating the change vision, (5) empowering broad based action, (6) generating short-term wins, (7) consolidating gains and producing more change, and (8) anchoring new approaches in the culture.<sup>43</sup> In order to gage how well the Army is doing in implementing the AFC, Kotter's eight-stage process is an excellent tool to follow.

*Establishing a Sense of Urgency.* For the Army, a bureaucratic, hierarchical organization, change is often met with resistance and can be very slow. According to Kotter, establishing a sense of urgency is critical. If urgency is low, individuals won't give the extra effort that is often essential in creating change.<sup>44</sup> Leadership is key in pushing the sense of urgency high enough to create change. Senior Army leaders

throughout the organization, from the Secretary, Chief, Vice Chief, and Sergeant Major of the Army all the way down to unit and installation commanders, are spreading the word about the AFC. But it is not just the Army leadership that is creating a sense of urgency; even the commander-in-chief understands the importance of military families and their impact on readiness. During the January 2008 State of the Union address to the nation, President Bush's remarks echoed the sentiment of the Army leadership, "Our military families also sacrifice for America...we have a responsibility to provide for them."<sup>45</sup>

To demonstrate the urgency to Soldiers and their families, and to demonstrate its commitment to AI2 and make the AFC a reality, the Army is using surveys, web sites, and family forums to elicit information from families on what programs need to be improved and what programs are working. In addition, the Army activated a 24/7 toll free referral service for Soldiers, deployed civilians, and families. Calls are answered by humans, not a computer generated voice, who are trained consultants with master's degrees in social work or psychology. Consultants can discuss issues dealing with parenting, TRICARE, child care, relocation, finances, legal matters, elder care, education and everyday household issues.<sup>46</sup>

*Creating the Guiding Coalition.* For major change to take place, Kotter believes the head of the organization must be an "active supporter" and finding the right people, people in a position of power and expertise, is essential to guide the change. The Army started by putting together a group with enough power to lead the change. This group, under the direction of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management (ACSIM), with members from the Army National Guard (ARNG), U.S. Army Reserve (USAR),

Installation Management Command (IMCOM), the Family, Morale Welfare and Recreation Command (FMWRC), the Assistant Secretary for the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASA(M&RA)), Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (G-1), the Office of the Surgeon General (OTSG), and the Office of the Chief of Staff for Installation Management (OACSIM), has been charged with measuring the effectiveness of the Covenant. They report bi-monthly at a Senior Review Group forum where the Secretary, Chief, and Vice Chief of Staff of the Army review actions taken, identify issues for decision, and continue to provide strategic oversight of the initiative. Some of the actions and processes taken include legislation, programming and regulations to set baselines for future improvements to Soldier Family readiness.<sup>47</sup>

*Developing a Vision and Strategy.* According to Kotter, a sense of urgency and a strong guiding coalition are necessary but insufficient without a sensible vision.<sup>48</sup> Vision is a critical element in the development of culture, management of change, and interaction with the environment.<sup>49</sup> The AFC's vision is one of commitment; a commitment to provide Soldiers and their families a quality of life commensurate with their service. The Army shows its commitment by the AFC signing ceremonies that have taken place at every Army installation. During the ceremonies, the Army's senior leaders pledge their support to the Soldiers' families.

*Communicating the Change Vision.* The real power of vision is unleashed through credible communication and a shared understanding of its goals and direction.<sup>50</sup> Senior Army leaders are using focused messages to extend influence and gain public support for family programs. For example, the AFC was once again center stage at the AUSA 2008 conference where the Army leadership used this forum to highlight the

achievements gained in family programs, address issues of concern to military families and invite family members to ask questions about issues dealing with the demands of military life. In addition, the AFC message is displayed on the inside cover of the 2008 Army Posture Statement, on Army websites, and on brochures and information handed out at various Army conferences and meetings.

General Casey's message over the past year remains unchanged; he continues to reinforce his message with general officers, senior Army leaders, Congress, and the American public, of an Army "out of balance"<sup>51</sup> and his resolve to improve programs and services for Army families. Through the use of web sites, print media, pamphlets, and DVD messages, Casey's message is permeating throughout the Army.

*Empowering Broad-Based Action.* Kotter asserts implementing major change requires action from a large number of individuals.<sup>52</sup> Change does not happen in a single event; it is a process linked to people, resources and activities. If the change is supported by a larger audience it will be easier to make the change efforts known. The easiest groups to call to action are the family members themselves because they are the recipients of the Army's commitment under the AFC. Family Readiness Group leaders are essential in spreading the message of the AFC and the details of the changes that are being made. They also provide critical feedback to the Army leadership on what is working and where more emphasis is needed. At the 2008 AUSA Conference, over 600 FRG leaders and members were in attendance at the Military Family Forums. In this venue, the attendees were given an update on the AFC and new family programs and initiatives. They were invited to share their experiences on how they are managing the stress of military life and any concerns or issues they might have

regarding family programs. After the conference, FRG leaders went back to their home stations to spread the word on the implementation of the AFC and the changes taking place in new and existing family programs.

Army chaplains are another group that has been moved to action. Soldiers are the heart of a chaplain's ministry, but they are also responsible for caring for the Soldiers' families.<sup>53</sup> Army chaplains, having long been an installation- and unit-based resource for specialized marriage and family pastoral counseling and education programs, are leading the Army's Strong Bonds program. Understanding that military life places extreme hardship on relationships, especially in wartime, Congress has committed resources to help Soldiers build stronger relationships through the Strong Bonds Program.<sup>54</sup> Started in 1997, Strong Bonds is a specialized holistic preventative program for single Soldiers, couples and families, which focus on the restoration and preservation of Army families.<sup>55</sup> To date more than 30,000 couples have attended over 1,300 Strong Bonds events with more than 90% expressing satisfaction.<sup>56</sup> Chaplains are promoting the program through public service announcements, brochures, posters, and ads, and through advocacy during the Military Forums at the 2008 AUSA conference to promote the Army's Strong Bonds program.

Local communities have also been stirred to action. The Army is reaching communities outside the installation through the Army Community Covenant (ACC). The ACC is designed to develop and foster community partnerships and improve the quality of life for Soldiers and their families. A total of 83 Community Covenant signing ceremonies have been completed with at least another dozen being planned in 2009.<sup>57</sup> Governors, Lieutenant Governors, members of Congress, State Officials and

Legislators, and Mayors are attending the Army Community Covenant signing ceremonies. Positive outcomes of these ceremonies are legislation that addresses educational transition needs of military children, in-state tuition to military families, public awareness of the needs of severely injured Service men and women, and tragedy assistance programs for surviving Family members.<sup>58</sup>

Family members are being empowered by sharing their stories; which helps them connect with each other and provides insight to help deal with the stress of being a military family. During her speech at the 2008 AUSA Conference Mrs. Shelia Casey, wife of General Casey, read from a blog posted by an Army wife. The blog stated, "I wasn't commissioned, and I didn't enlist, but on May 22, 2004, I joined the Army. My uniform was my white wedding dress, my oath of office, my wedding vows. It's just that when I said, I do, I had no idea how much I would really be doing." Army Families have many stories of hope and many stories of pain which they are sharing in blogs, e-mails, and at family forums and meetings in hope that their insights will help each other.

*Generating Short Term Wins.* Individuals need to see results within the first six to eighteen months to know the change is providing the expected results.<sup>59</sup> Even before the AFC was unveiled, the Army understood the need to move quickly to lessen the stress of Army families. So in April 2007, the Secretary of the Army, Pete Geren, and General Casey, approved \$100 million in supplemental funding to expand and enhance more than 50 existing Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs and services for Soldiers and their families. The FMWRC executed the funds against existing family programs where an immediate positive impact would be felt by those needing these services. FMWRC's number one priority was to increase staffing in ACS

by 185 personnel. "Quick Wins" support in other program areas, included, but was not limited to: providing Exceptional Family Member Respite Care, providing transportation to youth and sports programs, providing mission fatigue incentives to retain Child and Youth Services (CYS) staff, deploying CYS Transition Mobile Teams, expanding hourly care/respice care for "custodial" parents, increasing off post community based child programs, providing youth technology labs, and extending the operating hours of child care facilities.<sup>60</sup>

*Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change.* Short term wins do not equate to victory. According to Kotter, "declaring victory too soon is like stumbling into a sinkhole on the road to meaningful change."<sup>61</sup> One of the best ways to consolidate gains and produce more change is through "best practices;" a superior method or an innovative practice that contributes to improved performance of the process. The practice must demonstrate through data that it is "better, faster, cheaper."<sup>62</sup>

The Army is rewarding individuals and groups exhibiting "best practices" adopted in support of the SFAP, the AFC and the ACC. For example, the Quality of Life Awards acknowledge best practices and innovation achieved from garrisons and units which reflect senior Army leadership's commitment to providing Soldiers and their families with a quality of life commensurate of their service to the nation.<sup>63</sup> Another award, the Association of the United States Army Newell Rubbermaid Volunteer Family of the Year Award recognizes an Army family whose volunteer service contributes significantly to improving the well-being of Army families and the local community.<sup>64</sup>

The Army is also implementing "best practice" procedures and ensuring these ideas are shared through the use of web sites. The ACSIM website offers information

on National, State and Local “best practices.”<sup>65</sup> One such practice at the National level is the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) for Living in the New Normal: Supporting Children through Trauma and Loss.<sup>66</sup> This is a comprehensive program which responds with compassion and understanding to the needs of children. Another practice at the State Level is the Georgia National Guard full scholarship for returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Soldiers through the Georgia Military College.<sup>67</sup> These and hundreds of other “best practices” are listed on the ACSIM website and are being shared across installations and communities to use and help create new ideas for more change.

*Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture.* “Change sticks only when it becomes the way we do things around here.”<sup>68</sup> Anchoring requires that the next generation of leaders will personify the new change and that the change is shown to be successful. As senior leaders on the installation change command, the AFC is being re-signed to show the Army’s continued commitment to Soldiers and their families. As one senior leader stated, “Just because the first folks who signed the AFC have left does not mean there’s any less energy or desire to see this come to fruition. The team that signed this might have changed, but the commitment is the same.”<sup>69</sup>

For change to be successful, and to continue to provide the new and expanded programs for Soldiers and their families, it will require a predictable level of funding. In Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08), the initial funding level for FMWRC in the base for family programs was \$708 million. The Army provided an additional \$739 million in supplemental funding to support family programs, for a total of \$1.4 billion in funding during FY08. The budget for family programs in FY09 is \$1.7 billion. Wanting a



predictable level of funding, the Army increased the base family programs to \$1.2 billion with remainder of the funds coming from the supplemental. By providing over \$1 billion dollars more in FY09 than was funded in FY07, and \$300 million more than in FY08, the Army is truly living up to its commitment.

### Seven Functional Areas of the Army Family Covenant

Since October of 2007, the Army has strived to fulfill its commitment with the implementation of the AFC. In the Army's brochure, *Making the Covenant a Reality, Army Family Covenant Year in Review*,<sup>70</sup> the Army highlights the significant actions it has made to provide Soldiers and their families a supportive environment where they can live and thrive. Some of the Army's achievements are listed below.

*Standardizing and Funding Family Programs and Services.* The Army is committed to improving family readiness by standardizing and funding existing family programs and services. In this effort the Army created 477 ACS staff positions to meet operational demands and staffing shortfalls, secured funds to provide hourly child care for FRGs, provided \$8 million in exceptional family member respite care funding, supported 249 enduring National Guard Family Assistance Centers to assist Soldiers and families in accessing support service regardless of their geographic location, increased staffing and funding to hire 1,029 Family Readiness Support Assistants (FRSAs) down to deployable battalion level to provide support to FRG leaders, published FRSA handbooks to standardize roles and responsibilities, established Army One Source, provided \$35 million in marriage and relationship enhancement program funding across the Total Army, and added 33 Family Life Chaplain positions across the Army to deliver effective family ministry and training throughout the deployment cycle.

*Providing Top Quality Healthcare.* Reaching out to wounded Soldiers and their families the Army has created 35 Warrior Transition Units (WTUs) with the singular focus of warrior healing and support to Army Families. The Army also leveraged community based resources with nine community based healthcare organizations serving 1,513 Warriors in Transition (WITs) residing at home. In addition, the Army enhanced care for Traumatic Brain Injury/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (TBI/PTSD) by providing TBI/PTSD chain teaching to more than 900,000 Soldiers, conducted neurocognitive testing on more than 60,000 Soldiers prior to deployment, educated more than 400 providers on TBI care and programs and provided advanced PTSD training to 180 Army mental health providers. The Army also sought to ease the effects of deployments on children, spouses, and dual-military families by creating 32 additional Marriage and Family Therapist positions, creating 200,000 video and training products to strengthen resilience in military children and families, expanded Battlemind psychological training to include spouses, and began the development of the same product for children.

*Improving Housing.* According to Secretary Geren, if you ask a Soldier what makes a good quality of life his answer would be the home and neighborhood he lives in.<sup>71</sup> The Army continues to improve on post housing through the Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) with close to 16,000 homes having been built and another 12,000 renovated. RCI will provide more than 89,000 homes at 45 installations at end state in 2011. The Army is also providing on-post projects for single senior Soldier housing at Forts Irwin, Drum, Bragg, Stewart and Bliss. One thousand three hundred ninety-six 1 bedroom/1 bath and 2-bedroom/2-bath apartments will be provided by

2010/2011.<sup>72</sup> The Army has also improved barracks Army-wide by providing \$11.6 billion for permanent party barracks construction, renovation and modernization.

*Ensuring excellence in schools, youth programs and child care.* In this area the Army reduced CYS program fees, provided no-cost hourly care to families and caregivers of WITs during medical treatments and appointments, funded 72 FY08 Child Development Center construction projects, funded 11 new Youth Centers, expanded community-based outreach services in 42 states to children and youth of deployed Soldiers, and received 100% Department of Defense certification for all garrison Child and Youth programs.

*Expanding Employment and Educational Opportunities for Families.* The DoD and Department of Labor launched the Military Spouse Career Advancement Initiative providing up to \$3,000 yearly for education, training, certification, and licensing. The Army continues to partner with Fortune 500 companies and government agencies to provide employment opportunities to spouses and it has enhanced the Army Employment Readiness Program which provides job search assistance, skills training, and information and referral services.

*Improving Soldier Quality of Life.* The Army created the Warrior Adventure Quest program which provides Soldiers with activities such as rock climbing, mountain biking, water rafting, paintball, and snowmobiling. Not only is the Army providing sports, fitness, recreation, and library services to deployed personnel, but it also created the Wounded Warrior Sports program to provide a goal oriented sports program for physically disabled Soldiers remaining on active duty.

## Conclusion

Nothing remains the same, therefore organizations need to acknowledge when change is happening and be willing to adapt. The Army is committed to sustaining Soldiers and their families and is on track with the measures taken to live up to the promise it made to Soldiers and their families under the AFC. The Army is receiving positive feedback from its Soldiers and their families regarding the implementation of the AFC, but in no uncertain terms can this be used as the only measurement of effectiveness. For example, a depressed spouse may take advantage of free or reduced childcare to give her a much needed break from the stress she is feeling. She provides positive customer feedback to the childcare center because the service was available and affordable. But the availability and affordability of childcare is only a temporary solution to her real need which may be the need for mental healthcare. Within the resources available, the Army must determine how to distribute funding appropriately for each program and also determine what the point of diminishing return is for a particular family program. In addition, the presence of family programs might indicate the Army cares about families but it does not answer the question if all the programs and services should remain even though they may not be used or are under-utilized?<sup>73</sup>

The Army is a resilient force, but the effects of war have taken its toll and it will take some time before the Army knows if the measures it has taken are helping to mitigate the stress felt by its Soldiers and their families. The only way to ensure the vision of the AFC endures is for the Army's to resource its programs, keep senior leaders visibly involved in supporting the covenant, and determine the effectiveness of

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